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## OXFORD DEMOCRAT,

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### EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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## POPULAR TALES.

From Blackwood's Magazine.

### ADVENTURES IN TEXAS.

No. III.

#### THE STRUGGLE.

CONTINUED.

It was neither the time nor the place to indulge in speculations on this singular resurrection of a man whose execution I had myself witnessed. With twelve hundred foes around us, we had plenty to occupy all our thoughts and attention. My people were already masters of the gun, and some of them drew it forwards and pointed it against the enemy, while the others spread out right and left to protect it with their rifles. I was busy loading the piece when an exclamation of surprise from one of the men made me look up. There seemed to be something extraordinary happening amongst the Mexicans, to judge from the degree of confusion which suddenly showed itself in their ranks, and which, beginning with the cavalry and right flank of the infantry, soon became general throughout the whole force. It was a sort of wavering and unsteadiness which, to us was quite unaccountable, for Fanning and Wharton had not yet fired twenty shots, and indeed had not only just come within range of the enemy. Not knowing what it could portend, I called in my men and stationed them round the gun, which I had double loaded and stood ready to fire.

The confusion in the Mexican ranks increased. For about a minute they wavered and reeled to and fro, as if uncertain which way to go; and at last, the cavalry and right of the line, fairly broke and ran for it. This example was followed by the center, and presently the whole of the two battalions and three hundred cavalry were scattered over the prairie, in the wildest and most disorderly flight. I gave them a parting salute from the eight pounder, which would doubtless have accelerated their movements had it been possible to have run faster than they were already doing.

We stood staring after the fugitives in perfect bewilderment, totally unable to explain their apparently causeless panic. At last the report of several rifles from the island of trees gave us a clue to the mystery.

The infantry, whose left flank extended to the Salado, had pushed their right into the prairie as far as the island of musket trees, in order to connect their line with the dragoons, and then by making a general advance to attack us on all sides at once, and get the full advantage of their superior numbers. The plan was not a bad one. Infantry and cavalry approached the island, quite unsuspecting of its being occupied. The twelve riflemen whom we had stationed there remained perfectly quiet, concealed behind the trees; allowed squadrons and companies to come within twenty paces of them, and then opened their fire first from their pistols, then from their rifles.

Some six and thirty shots, every one of which told, fired suddenly from a cover close to their rear, were enough to startle even the best troops, much more so our Mexican dons, who already sufficiently inclined to a panic, now believed themselves fallen into an ambush, and surrounded on all sides by the incarnate devils, as they called us. The cavalry, who had not yet recovered the thrashing we had given them were ready enough for a run, and the infantry were not slow to follow them.

Our first impulse was suddenly to pursue the flying enemy, but a discovery made by some of the men, induced us to abandon that idea. They had opened the pouches of the dead Mexicans in order to supply themselves with ammunition, ours being nearly expended; but the powder of the cartridges turned out so bad as to be useless. It was little better than coal dust, and would not carry a ball fifty paces to kill or wound. This accounted for our apparent invulnerability to the fire of the Mexicans. The muskets also were of a very inferior description. Both they and the cartridges were of English make; the former being stamped Birmingham, and the latter having the name of an English powder manufactory, with the significant addition, "for exportation."

Under these circumstances, we had nothing to do but to let the Mexicans run. We sent a detachment to the musket island, to unite itself with the twelve men who had done such good service there, and thence advance towards the ford. We ourselves proceeded slowly in the latter direction. This demonstration brought the fugitives back again, for they had most of them in the wild precipitation of their flight, passed the only place where they could cross the river. They began crowding over in the greatest confusion, foot and horse all mixed up together; and by the time we got within a hundred paces of the ford, the prairie was nearly clear of them; there was still a couple of hundred men on our side of the water, completely at our mercy, and Wharton who was a little in front with thirty men, gave the word to fire upon them. No one obeyed. He repeated the command. Not a rifle was raised. He stared at his men, astonished

and impatient at this strange disobedience. An old weather-beaten bear hunter stepped forward, squirting out his tobacco juice with all imaginable deliberation.

I tell ye what, captin! said he, passing his quid over from his right cheek to his left; I calkilate, captin, he continued; we'd better leave the poor devils of dons alone.

The poor devils of dons alone! repeated Wharton in a rage. Are you mad man? Fanning and I had just come up with our detachment, and were not less surprised and angry than Wharton was, at this breach of discipline. The man, however, did not allow himself to be disconcerted.

There's a proverb gentlemen, said he turning to us, which say that one should build a golden bridge for a benten enemy; and a good proverb it is, I calkilate—a considerable good one.

What do you mean, man, with your golden bridge? cried Fanning. This is no time for proverbs.

Do you not know that you are liable to be punished for insubordination? said I. It's your duty to fire, and do the enemy all the harm you can; not to be quoting proverbs.

Calkilate it is, replied the man very coolly. Calkilate I could shoot 'em without either danger or trouble, but I reckon that would be like Spaniards or Mexicans; not like Americans—not prudent.

Not like Americans? you would let the enemy escape, then, when we have him in our power?

Calkilate I would. Calkilate we should do ourselves more harm than him by shootin' down his people. That was a considerable sensible commendment of yours, always to shoot the foremost Mexican when they attacked. It discouraged the bold ones and was a sort of premium on cowardice. Them as lagged behind escaped, them as come bravely on was shot. It was a good calkilation. If we had shot 'em without discrimination, the cowards would have got bold, seeing that they weren't safer in rear than in front. The cowards are our best friends. Now them runaways, continued he, pointing to the Mexicans, who were crowding over the river, are jest the most cowardly of 'em all, for in their fright they quite forgot the ford, and it's because they run so far beyond it, that they are last to cross the water. And if you fire at 'em now, they'll find that they get nothing by being cowards and the next time I reckon, they'll sell their hides as dear as they can.

Untimely as this palaver, to use a popular word, undoubtedly was, we could scarcely forbear smiling at the simple native manner in which the old Yankee spoke his mind.

Calkilate, captins, he concluded, you'd better let the poor devils run. We shall get more profit by it than if we shot five hundred of 'em. Next time they'll run away directly, to show their gratitude for our generosity.

The man stepped back into the ranks, and his comrades nodded approvingly, and calculated and reckoned that Zebadiah had spoken a true word; and meanwhile the enemy had crossed the river, and was out of our reach. We were forced to content ourselves with sending a party across the water to follow up the Mexicans, and observed the direction they took. We then returned to our old position.

My first thought on arriving there was to search for the body of Bob Rock—for he it undoubtedly was, who had so mysteriously appeared amongst us. I repaired to the spot where I had seen him fall; but could not discover no signs of him, either dead or alive. I went over the whole scene of the fight, searched amongst the vines and along the bank of the river; there were plenty of dead Mexicans—cavalry, infantry, and artillery, but no Bob was to be found, nor could any one inform me what had become of him, although several had seen him fall.

I was continuing my search, when I met Wharton, who asked me what I was seeking and on learning, shook his head gravely. He had seen the wild prairie man, he said, but whence he came, or whether he was gone, was more than he could tell. It was a long time since any thing had startled and astonished him so much as this man's appearance and proceedings. He (Wharton), had been stationed with his party amongst the vines, about fifty paces in rear of Fanning's people, when just as the Mexican infantry had crossed the ford, and were forming up, he saw a man approaching at a brisk trot from the north side of the prairie. He halted about a couple of hundred yards from Wharton and his mustang to a bush, and with his rifle on his arm strode along the edge of the prairie in the direction of the Mexicans. When he passed near Wharton, the latter called out to him to halt, and say who he was, whence he came, and whither going.

Who I am is no business of yours, replied the man: nor where I come from neither. You'll soon see where I'm goin'. I'm goin' agin' the enemy.

Then you must come and join us, cried Wharton.

This the stranger testily refused to do. He'd fight on his own hook, he said.

Wharton told him he must not do that. He should like to see who'd hinder him, he said and walked on. The next moment he shot the first artilleryman. After that they let him take his own way.

Neither Wharton, nor any of his men, knew what had become of him; but at last I met with a bear hunter, who gave the following information.

Calkilate! said he, that the wild prairie man's rifle was a good one, as good a one as ever killed a bear, he tho't it a pity that it should fall into bad hands, so went to secure it himself. I thought the frontpiece of its dead owner warn't

very invitin'. But when he stooped to take the gun, he got such a shove as knocked him backwards and on getting up, he saw the prairie man openin' his jacket and examining a wound on his breast, which was neither deep nor dangerous although it had taken away the man's senses for a while.

The ball had struck the breast bone, and was quite near the skin, so that the wounded man pushed it out with his fingers. and then supporting himself on his rifle, got up from the ground, and without either a thanks, or a d—nye, walked to where his mustang was tied up, got on its back, and rode slowly away in a northerly direction.

This was all the information I could obtain on the subject, and shortly afterwards the main body of our army came up, and I had other matters to occupy my attention. General Austin expressed his gratitude and approbation to our brave fellows, after a truly republican and democratic fashion. He shook hands with all the rough bear and buffalo hunters, and drank with them. Fanning and myself he promoted on the spot to the rank of colonel.

We were giving the general a detailed account of the morning's events, when a Mexican priest appeared with a flag of truce and several wagons and craved permission to take away the dead. This was of course granted, and we had some talk with the padre, who however, was too wily a customer to allow himself to be pumped. What little we did get out of him, determined us to advance the same afternoon against San Antonio. We thought that there was some chance, that in the present panic struck state of the Mexicans, we might obtain possession of the place by a bold and sudden assault.

In this, however we were mistaken. We found the gates closed, and the enemy on his guard, but too disposed to oppose our taking up a position at about a cannon-shot from the great redoubt. We had soon invested all the outlets from the city.

San Antonio de Bexar lies in a fertile and well irrigated valley stretching westward from the river Salado. In the center of the town rises the fort of the Alamo, which at that time was armed with forty eight pieces of artillery of various calibre. The garrison of the town and fortress was nearly three thousand strong.

Our artillery consisted of two batteries of four six, and five eight-pounders; our army of eleven hundred men, with which we had not only to carry on the siege but also to make head against the forces that would be sent against us from Coahuila on the frontier of which province General Cos was stationed, with a strong body of troops.

We were not discouraged however and opened our fire upon the city. During the first week, not a day passed without smart skirmishes. General Cos's dragoons were swarming about us like so many Bedouins. But although well mounted, and capital horsemen, they were no match for our backwoodsmen. Those from the western states especially, accustomed to Indian warfare and cunning, laid traps and ambuscades for the Mexicans, and were constantly destroying their detachments. As for the besieged, if one of them showed his head for ten seconds above the city wall he was sure of getting a rifle bullet through it. I cannot say that our besieging army was a perfect model of military discipline; but any deficiencies in that respect were made good by the intelligence of the men, and the zeal and unanimity with which they pursued the accomplishment of one great object—the capture of the city—the liberty and independence of Texas.

The badness of the gunpowder used by the Mexicans, was again of great service to us. Many of their cannon balls that fell far short of us were collected and returned to them with perfect effect. We kept a sharp look-out for convoys, and captured no less than three—one of horses, another of provisions, and twenty thousand dollars in money.

After an eight week's siege, a breach having been made, the city surrendered, and a month later the fort followed the example. With a powerful park of artillery, we then advanced upon Goliad, the strongest fortress in Texas, which likewise capitulated in about four weeks' time. We were now masters of the whole country, and the war was apparently at an end.

But the Mexicans were not the people to give up their best province so easily. They had too much of the old Spanish character about them—that determined obstinacy which sustained the Spaniards during their protracted struggle against the Moors. The honor of their republic was compromised, and that must be redeemed. Thundering proclamations were issued, denouncing the Texans as rebels, who should be swept off the face of the earth, and threatening the United States for having aided us with money and volunteers. Ten thousand of the best troops in Mexico entered Texas, and were shortly to be followed by ten thousand more. The President, Gen. Santa Anna, himself came to take the command, attended by a numerous and brilliant staff.

The Texans laughed at the farfetchedness of the dons, and did not attach sufficient importance to these formidable preparations. Their good opinion of themselves, and contempt of their foes, had been increased to an unreasonable degree by their recent rapid successes. They forgot that the troops to which they had hitherto been opposed were for the most part militia, and that those now advancing against them were of a far better description, and had probably better powder.

I no call to arms made by our president, Burnet, was disregarded by many, and we could only get together about two thousand men, of whom nearly two thirds had to be left to garrison the forts of Goliad and Alamo. In the first named place we left seven hundred and sixty men, under the command of Fanning; in the latter, something

more than five hundred. With the remaining seven or eight hundred we took the field.

The Mexicans advanced so rapidly, that they were upon us before we were aware of it, and we were compelled to retreat, leaving the garrison of the two forts to their fate, and a right melancholy one it proved to be.

One morning news was brought to Goliad, that a number of country people, principally women and children, were on their way to the fort closely pursued by the Mexicans. Fanning, losing all precaution in his compassion for these poor people, immediately ordered a battalion of five hundred men, under the command of Major Ward, to go and meet the fugitives and escort them in. The major, and several officers of the garrison, doubted as to the propriety of this measure; but Fanning, full of sympathy for his unprotected countrywomen, insisted, and the battalion moved out. They soon came in sight of the fugitives, as they thought, but on drawing nearer, the latter turned out to be Mexican dragoons, who sprang upon their horses, which were concealed in the neighboring islands of trees, and a desperate fight began. The Mexicans, far superior in numbers, received every moment accessions. The Louisiana and Santa Fe cavalry, fellows who seem born on horseback, were there. Our unfortunate countrymen were hemmed in on all sides. The fight lasted two days, and only two men out of the five hundred escaped with their lives.

Before the news of this misfortune reached us, orders had been sent to Fanning to evacuate the fort and join us with six pieces of artillery. He received the order and proceeded to execute it. But what might have been very practicable for eight hundred and sixty men, was impossible for three hundred and sixty. Nevertheless, Fanning began his march through the prairie. His little band was almost immediately surrounded by the enemy. After a gallant defence, which lasted twelve hours, they succeeded in reaching an island but scarcely had they established themselves there, when they found that their ammunition was expended. There was nothing left for them, but to accept the terms offered by the Mexicans, who pledged themselves, that if they laid down their arms, they should be permitted to return to their homes. But the rifles were no sooner piled, than the Texans found themselves charged by their treacherous foes, who butchered them without mercy. Only an advancing post of three men succeeded in escaping.

The five hundred men whom we had left in San Antonio de Baxar, fared no better. Not being sufficiently numerous to hold out the town as well as the Alamo, they retreated into the latter. The Mexican artillery soon laid a part of the fort in ruins. Still its defenders held out. After eight days' fighting, during which the loss of the besiegers was tremendously severe, the Alamo was taken, and not a single Texian left alive.

We thus, by these two cruel blows, lost two thirds of our army, and little more than seven hundred men remaining to resist the numerous legions of our victorious foe. The prospect before us was one well calculated to daunt the stoutest heart.

The Mexican general, Santa Anna, moved his army forward in two divisions, one stretching along the coast towards Velasco, the other advancing towards San Felipe de Austin. He, himself, with a small force, marched in the centre. At Fort Bend, twenty miles below San Felipe, he crossed the Brazos, and shortly afterwards established himself with about fifteen hundred men in an entrenched camp. Our army, under the command of General Houston, was in front of Harrisburg, to which place the congress had retreated.

It was on the night of the twentieth of April, and our whole disposable force, some seven hundred men, was bivouacking in and about an island of sycamores. It was a cloudy stormy evening; a high wind was blowing, and the branches of the trees groaned and creaked above our heads. The weather harmonized well enough with our feelings, which were sad and desponding when we thought of the desperate state of our cause. We (the officers) were sitting in a circle round the general and Alcalde, both of whom appeared uneasy and anxious. More than once they got up, and walked backwards and forwards, seemingly impatient, as if they were waiting for, or expecting something. There was a deep silence throughout the whole bivouack; some were sleeping, and those who watched were in no humor for idle chat.

'Who goes there?' suddenly shouted one of the sentries. The answer we did not hear, but it was apparently satisfactory, for there was no further challenge, and a few seconds afterwards an orderly came up, and whispered something in the ear of the Alcalde. The latter hurried away, and presently returning, spoke a few words in a low tone to the general, and then to us officers. In an instant we were all upon our feet. In less than ten minutes, the bivouack was broken up, and our little army on the march.

All our people were well mounted, and armed with rifles, pistols and bowie-knives. We had six field pieces, but we only took four, harnessed with twice the usual number of horses. We marched at a rapid trot the whole night, led by a tall, gaunt figure of a man who acted as our guide, and kept some distance in front. I more than once asked the Alcalde who this was. 'You will know by and by,' was his answer.

Before daybreak we had ridden five and twenty miles, but had been compelled to abandon two more guns. As yet, no one knew the object of this forced march. The general commanded a halt and ordered the men to refresh and strengthen themselves by food and drink. While they were doing this, he assembled the officers around him, and the meaning of our night march was explained to us. The camp in which the Mexican

President and general-in-chief had entrenched himself was within a mile of us; General Parza, with two thousand men, was twenty miles further to the rear; General Filisola, with one thousand, eighteen miles lower down on the Brazos; Viesca, with fifteen hundred, twenty-five miles higher up. One bold and decided blow, and Texas might yet be free. There was not a moment to lose, nor was one lost. The general addressed the men.

'Friends! Brothers! Citizens! General Santa Anna is within a mile of us with fifteen hundred men. The hour that is to decide the question of Texan liberty is now arrived. What say you? Do we attack?'

'We do!' exclaimed the men with one voice, cheerfully and decidedly.

In the most perfect stillness we arrived within two hundred paces of the enemy's camp. The reveille of the sleeping Mexicans was the discharge of our two field pieces loaded with canister. Rushing on to within twenty-five paces of the entrenchment, we gave them a deadly volley from our rifles, and then, throwing away the latter,—bounced up the breastworks, a pistol in each hand. The Mexicans, scared and stupefied by this sudden attack, were running about in the wildest confusion, seeking their arms, and not knowing which way to turn. After firing our pistols, we threw them away as we had done our rifles, and, drawing our bowie-knives, fell, with a shout, upon the masses of the terrified foe. It was more like the boarding of a ship than any land fight I had ever seen or imagined.

My station was on the right of the line, where the breastwork, ending in a redoubt, was steep and high. I made two attempts to climb up, but both times slipped back. On the third trial I nearly gained the summit; but was again slipping down, when a hand seized me by the collar, and pulled me up on the bank. In the darkness and confusion I did not distinguish the face of the man who rendered me this assistance. I only saw the glitter of a bayonet which a Mexican thrust into his shoulder, at the very moment he was helping me up. He neither flinched nor let go his hold of me till I was fairly on my feet;—then turning slowly round, he levelled a pistol at the soldier, who at that very moment, was struck down by the Alcalde.

'No thanks to ye, squire!' exclaimed the man in a voice that made me start, even at that moment of excitement and bustle. I looked at the speaker, but could only see his back, for he had nearly plunged into the thick of the fight, and was engaged with a party of Mexicans, who defended themselves desperately. He fought like a man more anxious to be killed than to kill, striking furiously right and left, but never guarding a blow, though the Alcalde, who was by his side, warned off several which were aimed at him.

By this time my men had scrambled up after me. I looked round to see where our help was most wanted, and was about to lead them forward, when I heard the voice of the Alcalde.

'Are you badly hurt, Bob?' asked he in an anxious tone.

I glanced at the spot whence the voice came. There lay Bob Rock, covered with blood, and apparently insensible. The Alcalde was supporting his head on his arm. Before I had time to give a second look, I was hurried forward with the rest towards the centre of the camp, where the fight was at the hottest.

About five hundred men, the pick of the Mexican army, had collected round a knot of staff-oak trees, and were making a most gallant defence. General Houston had attacked them with three hundred of our people, but had not been able to break their ranks. His charge, however, had shaken them a little, and before they had time to recover from it, I came up. Giving a wild hurrah my men fired their pistols, hurled them at their enemies' heads, and then springing over the carcasses of the fallen, dashed like a thunderbolt into the broken ranks of the Mexicans.

A frightful butchery ensued. Our men, who for the most part, and at most times, peaceable and humane in disposition, seemed converted into perfect fiends. Whole ranks of the enemy fell under their knives. Some idea may be formed of the horrible slaughter from the fact, that the fight, from beginning to end, did not last above ten minutes, and in that time nearly eight hundred Mexicans were shot or cut down. 'No quarter!' was the cry of the infuriated assailants: 'Remember Alamo! Remember Goliad! Think of Fanning, Ward!' The Mexicans threw themselves on their knees, imploring mercy. *Misericordia! Cuartel, por el amor de Dios!* shrieked they in heart-rending tones; but their supplications were not listened to, and every one of them would inevitably have been butchered, had not General Houston and the officers dashed in between the victors and the vanquished, and with the greatest difficulty, and by threats of cutting down our own men if they did not desist, put an end to this scene of bloodshed, and saved the Texan character from the stain of unmanly cruelty.

When all was over, I hurried back to the place where I had left the Alcalde with Bob—the latter lay, bleeding with six wounds, only a few paces from the spot where he had helped me up the breastwork. The bodies of two dead Mexicans served him for a pillow. The Alcalde was kneeling by his side, gazing sadly and earnestly into the face of the dying man.

For Bob was dying; but it was no longer the death of the despairing murderer. This expression of his features was calm and composed, and his eyes were raised to heaven with a look of hope and supplication.

I stooped down and asked him how he felt himself, but he made no answer, and evidently did not recollect me. After a minute or two,







This image is a high-contrast, black and white scan of a textured surface. It features a prominent vertical strip on the left side, which appears to be a book binding or a piece of fabric with a distinct woven pattern. The rest of the image is a dark, grainy background with some faint, vertical lines and speckles, suggesting a textured surface or a scan of a dark material.

This image shows a vertical strip of material, likely a book binding or a piece of fabric, characterized by a dark, textured background. The strip is composed of numerous fine, parallel lines, suggesting a woven or layered structure. The overall appearance is grainy and high-contrast, with a dark, almost black, background and a lighter, textured strip running vertically. The texture of the strip is irregular, with some areas appearing more densely woven than others. The image has a vintage, high-contrast quality, possibly from a microfilm or a low-quality photocopy.



